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ABSTRACT

This monograph, itself a suggested set of standards, is designed to help college personnel determine the college's state of readiness for extended work force development. Two questions about that role are offered: (1) is the college, and are community colleges nationally, prepared to become the central player in a comprehensive education and training system; and (2) if they are not, how can they prepare themselves. This paper, a "call for action," attempts to help community colleges answer these questions in two ways. First, a self-study guide offers a series of questions that require college personnel to examine their institution's readiness to prepare workers for the new workplace. All responses must be evaluated within the context of local conditions, needs, and political considerations. The 19 questions relate to mission and organization, funding, assessing needs and documenting success, programs and delivery systems, staffing, and coordination. Second, the monograph offers 17 suggestions to assist local colleges in creating a vision and plan that will ready them to meet both local challenges and the demands of state and federal governments and to become part of a national community of prepared colleges. The suggestions relate to preparing the institution, preparing programs and faculty, and preparing the nation's community colleges. National Council for Occupational Education task forces, their objectives, and leadership are listed. (YLB)

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National Council for Occupational Education Monograph Series

American Workforce Development

Community and Technical Colleges Prepare to Meet the Challenge

A Position Paper

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Mission, Goals, Priorities

The **National Council for Occupational Education** is a private, non profit, professional organization committed to promoting excellence and growth in occupational education. As an affiliate council of the American Association of Community Colleges, NCOE provides a national forum for occupational, vocational, technical, and career education and economic development professionals, faculty, business, labor, military, and government representatives to affect and direct the future of work-related education globally, and the role of two-year colleges in this arena.

NCOE'S Primary Goals

- To provide a national forum in occupational education and economic development,
- To support federal and state legislation enhancing post secondary education and economic development,
- To advise the American Association of Community Colleges on policy development affecting occupational education,
- To provide critical information to members on current and future trends,
- To provide leadership through national and regional research studies, projects, and conferences, and
- To link NCOE members to other important organizations whose missions and goals are similar to those of the national council.

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Introduction and Acknowledgements

This publication is the product of the thinking of a group of individuals each of whom has been recognized as an expert and/or researcher in workforce development policy. This group interacted for two days in Washington, DC, to create the initial concepts and draft outline. Over the next few months the document was reviewed by members of the board of the National Council for Occupational Education (NCOE) and approved as an NCOE statement of policy. Thanks to the members of the initial "think tank" group who are listed below.

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Preamble

Over the past decade, governmental and educational leaders have devoted much time to discussing the relative readiness of the American workforce to deal with the challenges of emerging technologies and redefined workplaces. As international competition within a global marketplace has increased, questions concerning American worker productivity and the preparation of the workforce have become common themes of critics in the popular press as well as in professional and governmental publications. Authors of *A Nation at Risk* (The Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), *The Forgotten Half* (Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship, W.T. Grant Foundation, 1988), and *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages?* (Commission on the Study of the American Workforce, 1990), and numerous other publications have concluded that both the workforce and the educational system that produces and trains it are not adequate for the emerging challenges of the twenty-first century. Recently the U.S. Department of Education (1992) defined the problem very concretely:

> One of every five American workers reads at or below the eighth grade level and one of every eight reads at the fourth grade level. Much of the reading required in a cross section of jobs ranked between the eighth and twelfth grade levels. Fifteen percent of job-related material required even higher levels. . . . the skills gap is expected to widen. (p. 4)

This general mismatch between what exists and what is needed is caused by a number of things, among them rapidly changing conceptions of work, integration of new technologies at almost all levels of work, and a traditionalism in industrial and educational environments that has been delinquent in addressing these changes. Overall, writers have judged both the American workforce and the nation's educational system to be inferior to American competitors, particularly Germany and Japan. In response, many American businesses have initiated changes in process, product, and management through such concepts as Total Quality Management, Statistical Process Control, and Continuous Quality Improvement; but education has been slower to adapt. Businesses are expecting similar changes to occur in both curricular and educational delivery so that workers can enter the workplace with the requisite skills to handle the new industrial processes.

Change in workforce education, which necessarily must follow changes in business, has begun at many institutions, but all community colleges in the country must see workforce redevelopment as a top priority and adapt accordingly. General calls for reform have been met with fairly limited action. "By the mid-1980s, employers realized that employees capable of meeting international competition needed job competencies that hinged on adequate education. . . . Industries began to extend investment in employee education to front-line workers. . . . Still, America was falling behind" (U.S. Department of Education, 1992, p.4). Most companies seem to deal with the challenges of competition through downsizing, an approach that improves the bottom line without necessarily improving the product. Most educational institutions seem to redesign existing programs or to create easily excisable add-ons in a similar "this too shall pass" approach. The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991) reported that

> many educators have responded. Most communities in the United States have felt the impact: new curricula, adult literacy efforts, compensatory programs, in-school child care, new teacher training efforts - all of these have been tried. Yet, despite some promising exceptions, we are unable to demonstrate that things are, on the whole, much better. . . . (p. 4)

Calls for emergency aid to systems that will transfer students from school to the workplace are numerous. The National Coalition for Advanced Manufacturing (NACFAM) (1993) argued that

> to insure its competitive advantage, the United States must invest more heavily in technical education programs. Yet it is misleading to conclude that "no system" exists for this purpose. Technical education in secondary and two-year postsecondary schools provides resources and facilities with the potential for preparing students for work. In its pursuit of a globally competitive workforce, the federal government should focus on improving these schools . . . .(p. 3)

However educational institutions deal with training and retraining the American workforce, they cannot simply dismiss the challenges of training and they cannot wait for aid. The skill requirements of the new workplace are different, as is the composition of

the workforce itself. The readiness of the new workforce depends in large part on the quality and effectiveness of the training it receives, and that in turn depends on educational change.

As many community colleges have already discovered, most of that change will have to occur throughout the educational system, not only in content but also in orientation. Preparing an individual with a finite package of skills that is expected to be useful throughout a career, the traditional approach of education (with business blessing) for the last century, is now both undesirable and dangerous, and greater emphasis must be placed on a broader range of generalized skills, mental flexibility, and lifelong learning. This may mean a redefinition of the relative roles of secondary and postsecondary education. Given the emphasis on relatively advanced academic skills and on lifelong learning in the calls for educational change, it is easy to conclude that two-year colleges will have to play a leading role in any comprehensive workforce development strategy. In Two-year Colleges: What Role Will They Play in Improving the School-to-work Transition? (1994), Richard Kazis expresses a recently emerging, commonly held opinion:

> It is no surprise . . . that the two-year college is seen by many as the most appropriate institution for the delivery of technical skill training in this country and, therefore, as the logical postsecondary partner with high schools linking school to work. (p. 3)

Two questions about that role emerge immediately. Are community colleges prepared, locally and nationally, to become such a centerpiece? And if they are not, what is required to place them in readiness? While many colleges are in some state of preparation this paper suggests how community colleges might assess their state of preparedness. First, it offers a series of questions that colleges can use to examine their readiness to prepare workers for the new workplace. Then it offers a number of changes to be considered for college organization, the delivery of service, and the establishment of a commitment that can help colleges become the workforce development agencies that America will need in the twenty-first century.

Examining the College

Many community colleges across the country are already leaders in local workforce development; most others have begun the process of examining their readiness to train the new workforce. Many have already asked and answered the questions that follow. Their progress toward a defined role in workforce development does not obviate the

need for similar self-examination in all community colleges, nor for consideration of a larger view of the community college role in regional and national terms. The suggested examination below seeks to leave each college with a real picture of its desire and capability to be a "player" in this critical time for workforce development. Each question essentially asserts a required component of that readiness, and further asserts that colleges which are found wanting are not in a prime position to succeed. While the importance or requirement of any single question is debatable, the intent and collective body of these questions are not. In fact, there is simply not time for a national debate on the appropriateness of the community college role in workforce development — only a debate on priorities, direction, and methodologies. Doug Ross, Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training, U.S. Department of Labor, made the point extremely clear as he addressed the role of the community colleges in the Reemployment Act: "If the Reemployment Act is to support the realization of the President's vision, community colleges are going to have to step up to a much larger role" (p. 19). Again, now is the time to demonstrate local, regional, and national readiness, capability, innovative strategy, and determination of two-year colleges.

At whatever stage of preparedness an individual community college may see itself, the following self-study guide should be of use. It is constructed around a series of questions which require college personnel to examine their institution. All responses must be evaluated within the context of local conditions, needs, and political considerations.

Mission and Organization

1. **Does the college's mission statement focus in a significant way on workforce development?** While many college mission statements mention workforce development, most tend to focus on the modes of delivery (e.g., "excellent credit and non-credit programs... community service... training and education... service to adult students... ") and not on the purpose and products of those modes. This question really asks colleges to focus on the ends of education and training, not the means.

2. **Are those parts of the college that deliver in-service upgrade workforce training and retraining, as well as noncredit pre-training, explicitly a significant part of the mission? Are they politically an important part of the organization?** Most colleges can justifiably claim that parts of their organization provide workforce development services. How central those services are in institutional thinking is reflected in such areas as administrative structure, governance, and funding. If these workforce development functions are not centrally planned and funded, the institution's real commitment to full workforce development may be tentative.

3. **Do the college's processes, services, and structures support the needs of nontraditional learners?** Most community colleges were founded in a standard, semester-based, FTE-generating mode, which is largely irrelevant to the kinds of programs and delivery systems that the development of the new workforce will require. Rather than trying to convert workforce development programs to the traditional model, colleges should develop appropriate processes, services, and structures for nontraditional training.

Funding

While community colleges do not generally control the criteria for funding, except insofar as they can negotiate them with local or state sponsors, they can use the following questions to develop strategies to modify the priorities of those who do control them. This strategizing is ultimately more likely to be a state and national effort, but individual colleges still need to assess the viability of their workforce development efforts in the context of funding priorities to determine the relative need to change the priorities.

4. **Do funding mechanisms acknowledge the centrality of workforce development?** Many state and local funding assumptions are based on credit-generated FTEs, certainly a convenient mechanism, albeit not necessarily one that deals effectively or fairly with all aspects of workforce development. These assumptions may in turn drive such things as institutional research, so that very little information on workforce development or economic impact is kept because it has no direct effect on funding.

5. **Does the college make any efforts to influence funding formulas in order to include the needs of the emerging workforce as well as instructional innovation?** Most funding now seems to be based on headcounts in credit programs, despite the fact that most workforce development work occurs elsewhere. Colleges may want to consider proposing different approaches to funding, though they should do so in a coordinated, regional way.

Assessing Needs and Documenting Success

6. **How effectively does the college assess labor market needs or use available local labor market data?** College planners need to become experts at needs assessment through examination of long-term trends at local, regional, and national levels. While most colleges use labor market data for program planning and assessment, all colleges should routinely monitor local labor markets and collect data, rather than rely on data which are part of state or national collection systems that suffer from being dated.

7. **How well do degree and certificate exit requirements match with industry and professional standards?** Allied health programs, by and large, require a correlation between exit skills and job requirements, but other programs that can document the same degree of correlation are rare. The expectations of allied health programs should be the standard by which all other programs are measured, from associate degrees to short-term, skill-upgrade offerings.

8. **Does the college explicitly measure its success in terms of its contribution to the development of the local and regional economy?** Graduation and graduate-placement rates have been the traditional measures of success. Community colleges need to address the much larger student population, both credit and non-credit, the one that does not—and never intended to—graduate, and they need to tie their efforts much more explicitly to issues of job generation, upgrading, retraining, local company/business success, and economic development.

9. **Can the college's institutional research initiatives document the extent of the college's impact on the economic development of the community and the**

region? What is the extent to which the college has aided in starting new businesses, creating and retaining jobs, i assisting to attract businesses to the district, aiding companies to export goods and services, and improving the productivity of local businesses?

Programs and Delivery Systems

10. **How much do programs focus almost exclusively on entry-level skills?** While no one denies the importance of providing skills to students in all programs which will make them eligible and successful for entry-level jobs, it is clear that most entry-level skills will become obsolete in a comparably short time. Many community colleges are now planning programs that include other skills, like greater mental flexibility (what the American Society for Training and Development calls "learning to learn" skills) and an orientation toward lifelong learning. While entry-level skills seem the primary short-term desire of both students and employers, all colleges must emphasize the long term.

11. **Do programs train for discrete jobs or for job clusters?** Given the necessity for many workers in the new workforce to perform many different tasks, the job cluster approach seems to serve emerging needs more effectively and ethically.

12. **How "traditional" are the instructional approaches?** The students who will need workforce development and redevelopment services are likely to become the majority of the student body, yet they are the ones referred to as "nontraditional," implying that their requirements are odd or "out-of-synch" with those of the traditional student. They are older adults, minorities, and current workers. While many colleges have attempted schedule adjustments and additional services like day care, very few have addressed the central mismatch between pedagogy and instructional content on the one hand and workforce development needs on the other. How adults, current workers, and those with nontraditional college plans are treated needs to be a central concern.

13. **Are the business development and workforce training centers part of the regular college programming?** Do these centers function on an equal footing with traditional programs, or are they seen as add-on revenue

centers? How are they involved in institutional planning and budgeting? Are they included in the development of new programs? What criteria for success are applied to them?

14. **How are principles of quality improvement applied to the programs and to the college?** The application of principles to control quality in both the manufacturing and service industries is widespread. Companies are either electing to adopt quality control systems or are being forced to do so by competitors and customers. Students will require a knowledge of these systems in much the same way that they need a broad knowledge of computers. Are these principles applied in the operation of the college? Beyond the resulting improvement of service by the college, can students see these principles at work?

Staffing

15. **How do staffing patterns (hard-money and full-time positions as a percentage of total employees) within workforce development areas match patterns in traditional credit programs?** While there is no reason why the patterns in the two areas should be the same, colleges need to determine what relationship the patterns should have and if workforce development programs and initiatives receive their fair share. Because institutional values are driven by these patterns, they cannot be arrived at accidentally or by happenstance.

16. **What workplace experience do current instructors, counselors, and administrators have?** Many have followed academic tracks to jobs in higher education and have little more than a nodding acquaintance with workplace issues and demands. While advisory committees are used to provide "real world" input, faculty and staff could well benefit from real workplace experience or in-service that deals with workplace trends. The need is to be able to communicate to students from an experiential rather than a theoretical knowledge base about the world of work.

17. **What percentage of the college staff serves both traditional and nontraditional students?** One way of assessing a college's commitment to workplace develop-

ment is to examine the degree to which its core staff is assigned to it. Most colleges hired core staff to deal with traditional programs and students long before workforce development was important; whether these staff also will serve workforce development needs is a question that must be answered.

Coordination

18. **Is the thinking and planning of the college primarily "local" or "regional"?** The answer here might seem to be obvious: in most states local funding means local thinking because colleges are expected to be sensitive to satisfying the demands of the district and their governing boards. However, in most cases workforce development issues and demands tend to stretch beyond sponsorship borders, especially in urban and suburban colleges where the colleges' programs affect people and businesses in a regional area. Program planning and assessment must take into account regional and national trends because students may not remain within the district borders to work.

19. **Can the college provide data that support regional or national claims about workforce development?** While this question is related to the earlier question on the use of labor market data, it assumes that it is essential that local community colleges be involved in making both regional and national cases for their role in workforce development. They must be willing and ready to cooperate with other colleges so that regional and national planning may be accomplished collectively

Preparing the College for Workforce Development

That the nation has turned to community colleges for solutions to its workforce development problems and shortfalls is inarguable. The eyes of industry, state, and national government are focused on two-year colleges and are measuring their responsiveness and readiness. Simultaneously, they are investigating and investing in alternative (some say competitive) systems to meet the immediate worker development crisis. Now is the time to capture and permanently embody the role of the "preparer of the nation's workforce."

The following suggestions are offered to assist local colleges in creating a vision and plan which will ready them to meet both local challenges and the demands of state and federal governments and to become part of a national community of prepared colleges. While it is not asserted that each suggestion is critical, it is believed that a thoughtful self-analysis of and response to each suggestion will help the college determine its proper position relative to local demands and constraints, and within the context of "national readiness."

Preparing the Institution

1. **Ensure that the mission statement of the institution clearly claims the role of workforce preparation and that it is equal to other mission tenets.** The importance of this step cannot be understated. The mission statement of most colleges is the public proclamation of its priorities and intent and thereby provides the authority to fund and pursue initiatives. It is a public list of what the college believes to be important, usually representing the consensus of the institution and underwritten by the governing board. In essence it is the college's license to operate and to set goals and objectives. Every college needs a clear statement supporting workforce development so that the workforce development role will not be lost or treated with less seriousness and commitment than it deserves.

2. **Operate the institution as a "new world" organization.** The implications of this generalization sweep across the entire college and suggest changes in the way to think about the college's mission and services. These implications include many philosophies, programs, and processes already adopted by the very organizations the college claims to serve: business and government. Chief among them is the quality assurance component with its own implications for the way colleges interact with students and other clients. Also to be considered is the ability of the college to be flexible and quick to respond to changing local and national education/training needs; to teach and encourage cooperative and team initiatives rather than the competitiveness resulting from traditional class grading systems; to be student-need-driven (market responsive) when creating new services and systems; to incorporate assessment systems within each initiative that provide real outcomes measurement; to be environmentally responsive and to make visible

environmental initiatives to help students accept the importance of them; and to create professional-level promotional initiatives to create awareness of and to sell the college's workforce development capabilities. Senior administrators will, of necessity, need to be familiar with the popular literature on the "new world" organization that has so influenced business organizations.

3. **Create new student services that meet the needs of the nontraditional student.** While it may be argued that the needs of traditional and nontraditional students are essentially the same, there are differences. For example, most student recruitment offices appear to be focused on students who are not currently employed or individuals seeking short-term training for purposes of immediate employment. Student advising also appears to be focused on assisting students into and through traditional certificate and degree programs and does not encompass advice concerning job retraining and related topics. Placement centers, though more progressive than other college offices, are often very loosely tied to local business and industry. Ideally, the placement office, beyond providing traditional job-search skills, should identify real job openings and pathways for students to capture those jobs. Additionally, a placement office which is directly connected to business will become a critical component of program assessment and program development. Other student services like child care have been identified as crucial but are often available at times incompatible with working parents. Problems like child care, transportation, and finance of education are serious enough to prevent students from attaining the training they require.

4. **Create labor market information systems.** Affordable and workable systems need to be devised that ensure that data represent real workforce trends in the local and regional area. In fact, some argue that until such systems are established colleges will not be nimble or quickly responsive enough to keep pace with the changes.

5. **Build coalitions and partnerships.** Early recognition that community colleges are not the sole players in workforce development will result in colleges seeking to know and recognize other organizations that labor in the

same field. Coalitions and partnerships with other stakeholders, such as community-based organizations, other education institutions, government units, and business, will bring the greatest amount of resources to bear on the problems. Meetings to discuss and define roles and to divide responsibilities will reduce the competitiveness and duplication and ultimately result in a vision of a "workforce development system" within each community. This move is the intent of legislation currently working its way through Congress and within the plans of many state-level workforce development strategies. New distance-learning delivery systems will very likely lead toward the creation of many new coalitions.

6. **Incorporate the economic development/business service office into the college.** The creation of these service offices a decade ago in most colleges was to meet two needs: to assist the college to react to the calamities of economic recession and depression, and to become an institutional revenue center. Over the years, because of diminishing resources, these offices have been assessed more on their ability to deliver revenue than to serve district training needs. In many colleges they are the only offices that must pay their own costs or be eliminated. Yet economic development may be the office best prepared to deal directly with the workforce development demands of businesses, and the only office capable of designing and delivering education and training quickly and effectively. All colleges certainly should review the status of these offices and consider reorganization, placing them closer to the credit technical occupational programs.

Preparing Programs and Faculty

7. **Face the reality of the obsolescence of faculty and programs.** Developing reluctant faculty and changing ensconced programs is one of the most difficult tasks facing colleges. Some colleges avoid the problem by placing workforce development in the non-credit, or adult continuing education division or within economic development offices. The effects of this approach are both negative and numerous. Certainly and generally, the resources of the college, which continue to flow to potentially ineffective faculty and programs, are being misplaced because diminishing resources are not put

into the most critical programs. Additionally, alternative placement of workforce development programs may denigrate the image of the importance of the program by implying that the program is not important enough to receive the college's best effort, best faculty, and maximum resources. Perhaps this is the critical balance point for determining whether a college is really committed to workforce development or not.

8. **Investigate new delivery systems and modify existing systems.** The standard methods of delivering training and education likely will remain useful for the future but they do not address some of the developing needs in the workforce. Scheduling that breaks from the "semester-based" tradition, which limits departure from day classes taught one hour per day three days weekly, may be replaced with shortened or condensed schedules which will train students and place them back on the job more quickly. Of more importance, perhaps, will be the use of alternative delivery systems which may include computer/video interactive-learning systems, distance-learning systems, and work-based learning as examples.

   To create new systems or to adapt to commercially-based learning systems will require a deep and continual investment in faculty development. Colleges cannot move to "world class status" without faculty who are prepared, motivated, and committed to new pedagogy.

9. **Create programs that are seamless, trackless, and classless.** Ensure that occupational programs are not operated in isolation from other programs within the college which would prevent students from making reasonable changes in their programs. Consider grouping programs so that beginning courses might be the same for several programs, allowing the student to explore before committing to a single track. Ensure that the skills within a single program are similar to those in the same programs at other institutions, thereby providing mobility for students who may change institutions. In essence, provide as much flexibility as is reasonable so that students can move among programs within and between institutions.

10. **Create occupational programs centered around skill "clusters."** Rather than preparing students for a single job requiring a focused set of skills, prepare students to be able to adapt to a number of similar jobs. Build in flexibility and mobility with skills that have a longer life. European systems often design programs with tiers of skills that allow the student initially to learn skills with broad application to several similar occupations. As they progress through the program, the tiers become increasingly focused on a single profession. The advantage, of course, is the opportunity to explore several jobs without having to commit to one too early.

11. **Add a second set of skills which are "work-oriented, general education skills" to the skill "clusters."** A number of publications of national scope and importance, such as those from the U.S. Department of Labor and the American Society for Training and Development, argue that the new worker will be required to have an additional set of skills beyond those which are job specific. Called by a number of different names, they amount to general education skills for the worker. They prepare the worker to function more efficiently with co-workers to build "cells" of workers who cooperatively work on projects with less oversight and management. They include problem analysis and problem solving, group communication, teamwork, finding and using technical information, project management, and self-teaching, among others. While many colleges claim that occupational students are provided with these skills, it is often done through traditional general education courses taught apart from the technical courses by faculty with little experience in the world of work. The concept of "academic and technical integration" is one that should be considered at every college.

12. **Establish standards and certification processes for each program.** The goal for this initiative is aimed at reasonable standardization of occupational preparation which provides the student with the ability to locate anywhere in the country and be employable in his/her profession. It also moves colleges toward establishing standards of excellence which reflect the expectations of industry and industry's drive to reach high quality standards. This process, under the leadership of government and industry, is under way nationally and is a

reality to be faced at the local college level. This movement toward "industry-based" standards is certainly not a new one. Almost all health care occupational programs have been operating under certification and licensure systems for years.

13. **Stay close to small and medium-sized businesses.** Most new jobs will be created in smaller businesses as larger businesses continue to down-size. Smaller businesses cannot afford formal employee training systems or commercial technical learning systems. Their employee needs are often for people with multiple skills or broad knowledge which will allow one person to do more than a single job.

14. **Teach entrepreneurial skills.** Help individuals envision owning their own businesses. Make students aware of the difficulties, risks, and rewards of business ownership. The skills which will support the opening of new businesses also can be applied within larger businesses where individuals can lead companies into new ventures.

Preparing the Nation's Community Colleges

Preparedness at the local level must be visible at the national level so that two-year colleges can have appropriate influence on policy, funding, legislation, and rule-making. While much good work is routinely accomplished in the nation's capitol, that work is impeded by a lack of a national two-year college vision and a will to make the vision real by providing data that reflect the strengths and successes of community and technical colleges.

15. **Create and promote a national proclamation which defines the role of the two-year college in workforce development.** The nation's colleges must determine what they intend to do—and not do—in the workforce development initiative. State and local college commitment to the workforce initiative should be achieved within a year. This commitment should be promoted with a significant investment in resources so that it receives the attention of the nation. Again and again it should be promoted until a national vision of the role is established. Let it drive the community college "national will" so that the college's strengths are felt where decisions

are made. Let that statement speak also of excellence and of performance-outcomes for the sake of accountability.

16. **Create a national database reflecting community and technical college potential and achievement.** Good hard data that accurately describe the overall, national power of the two-year college are not yet available and colleges are generally unable to substantiate claims of success except in isolated studies or in case-by-case narratives and demonstrations. A national database should be created which could demonstrate how great is the potential of community and technical colleges and also identify their limitations and areas for growth and improvement.

17. **Be institutionally accountable to real and useful standards.** The standards of measurement for institutional accountability as applied universally to higher education are not of use to measure the effectiveness of two-year colleges. They are based on "student exit from the institution" criteria which are usually graduation rates and program/degree completion rates. While these standards are of some importance, they do not reflect the real use made of the institutions by two-year college students. Many are not seeking degrees or certificates but are seeking courses and experiences which will lead to job security, mobility, and financial success. Standards for measuring two-year college effectiveness must be grounded upon institutional success in meeting the needs of each individual student. The ability to demonstrate improved quality of the life for students over time and to demonstrate college-based contributions to the positive economic development of districts is more relevant than completion rates. Without success in setting useful standards by which the real value of two-year colleges is measured, they will not achieve the recognition deserved nor grow in importance as the higher education venue of choice.

Conclusion

President Clinton in his 1995 State of the Union address spoke to America about the challenges of creating and maintaining a superior workforce and the initiatives under design to assist workers to reach their personal goals for training and education. For the first time ever, a president named community colleges as the central piece in this grand and essential enterprise. It is the time to claim and play the vital role offered to the colleges.

This monograph, itself a suggested set of standards, is designed to help college personnel determine the college's state of readiness for extended workforce development. Two questions about that role were offered: is your college, and are community colleges nationally, prepared to become the central player in a comprehensive education and training system, and if they are not, how can they prepare themselves? This paper, a "call for action," attempts to help community colleges answer those questions in two ways. First, it offers a series of questions that colleges can use to examine their readiness to prepare workers for the new workplace. Then it offers a number of changes to be considered for organizations, for service delivery, and in "ways of thinking" that can help colleges become the workforce development agencies that America will need in the twenty-first century.

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NCOE Task Force Issues

NCOE has task forces addressing major issues currently facing occupational education and workforce development. These task forces, their objectives and leadership are listed below.

Diversity

Analyze impact and interrelationship of occupational education with diversity and demographics in the workforce and relate to the national agenda. Develop strategies and examples of successful activities and a technical manual.

Chairs: J.D. Ross *Joliet Junior College*
Lydia Perez *El Paso Community College*

Homeless: Workforce Preparation

Clarify barriers the homeless face in seeking a role in the workforce. Develop options to provide occupational education and support successful transitions.

Chair: Lynn Slater *El Paso Community College*

School-to-Work

Clarify its concerns and focus on effective solutions as the national initiative develops.

Chair: Russell E. Hamm *Arapahoe Community College*
Patricia C. Donohue *St. Louis Community College*

Accountability - Skills Standards

Develop an annotated Bibliography of the current status of skills standards. Develop an implementation guide to assist colleges to develop curriculum which is responsive to the skills standards perspective.

Chair: Norval Wellsfry *Sacramento City College*

Workbased Learning

Analyze size and scope of workbased learning efforts in community colleges. Define terms and survey institutions.

Chairs: Russell E. Hamm *Arapahoe Community College*
Debra Bragg *University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign*

NCOE's Activities and Benefits

As an organization of over 1,000 members, the list of sponsored initiatives and activities are numerous and varied. NCOE is a volunteer organization and its success depends on the personal commitment of time, energy, and resources of its members and their institutions. The following list is an example of how the organization organizes itself to meet its' mission and objectives:

1. It publishes position papers, monographs, directories, newsletters, and participates in a journal. Examples:

   - the *NCOE* newsletter *WORKPLACE*,
   - the NCOE *Monograph Series* on occupational education issues,
   - the annual *Membership Directory* for access to the NCOE network

2. It offers a national network, organized by regions and states, connecting more than 500 two-year colleges on occupational education issues.

3. It underwrites research studies that investigate the strengths and challenges of two-year college occupational education.

4. It sponsors national conferences, workshops, and seminars on national issues. The NCOE national conference is held each fall.

5. It gathers and circulates ideas and models.

6. It monitors, reports on, and directly supports national legislation that enhances two-year college's abilities to deliver quality education.

7. It works directly with the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor.

8. It works directly with the National Center for Research in Vocational Education.